

decades, thus creating a strong temptation for future illegal aliens to purchase fraudulent documents on a burgeoning black market. Moreover, the bill's confidentiality provisions are drawn straight from the 1986 amnesty law and will provide the same haven for fraud and criminality as that law did.

Immigration is one of the top concerns of the American people—and of this administration—but it needs to be addressed in a comprehensive and balanced way that avoids creating incentives for problems in the future.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Ohio is recognized.

Mr. VOINOVICH. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that I be allowed to speak for 30 minutes as in morning business.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

#### FISCAL HEALTH OF THE NATION

Mr. VOINOVICH. Mr. President, I rise today to comment on the sad state of the appropriations process, as well as our long-term fiscal health. The new fiscal year began 23 days ago, and we are debating appropriations bills that haven't even passed the Senate yet, as Government agencies operate on temporary, stopgap funding. When we Republicans were in the majority, we consistently failed to enact all of the appropriations bills before the end of the fiscal year. We enacted short-term continuing resolutions, or CRs, to keep agencies funded while we wrapped several of those bills into an end-of-the-year omnibus bill.

After the Democrats won control of the Senate, I sincerely hoped they would fulfill their promises to manage the budget better. But while the party in power has changed, the results have stayed the same. In fact, the results, so far, have been even worse. Fiscal year 2008 has already started, and we have enacted exactly zero appropriation bills.

Government-by-CR has consequences. Agencies cannot plan for the future. They cannot make hiring decisions. They cannot sign contracts. As a result, we get more waste and inefficiency from Government. We get lower quality services provided to the people. At the end of the day, we get higher spending and less accountability and oversight of the taxpayers' money.

On September 23, the New York Times reported that our failures could have a devastating effect on cancer research because scientists are waiting around to hear if they will receive grants for their innovative research ideas. The same article quoted a transportation industry representative as saying our failure could have major implications for anyone who rides in cars, trucks, trains, buses, and subways. If you want more examples of how Congress's failure to do its job on time affects ordinary Americans, I invite you to visit my Web site, where I provide several additional examples.

That is why a bipartisan group of Senators agree that we need to adopt biennial budgeting by the Federal Government, such as I had as Governor of Ohio, so Congress can get its work done on time while also conducting the oversight necessary to ensure that programs and agencies are functioning effectively.

Senator DOMENICI has been a leader on biennial budgeting for years. We should adopt it during this Congress and name it the Pete Domenici Biennial Budgeting Act as part of Pete's legacy to this country.

Putting aside our short-term failures and focusing on our long-term problems, in January I introduced the Securing America's Future Economy, or SAFE Commission Act, legislation that would create a bipartisan commission to look at our Nation's tax and entitlement systems and recommend reforms to put us back on a fiscally sustainable course and ensure the solvency of entitlement programs for future generations.

I commend two of my colleagues, the Budget Committee chairman from North Dakota and the ranking member from New Hampshire, for recently introducing a bipartisan bill that would create a tax and entitlement reform task force very similar to my SAFE commission. In fact, I saw them on CNBC recently talking about it. The only major difference is that Senators CONRAD and GREGG require every congressional appointee to be a sitting Member of Congress, whereas the SAFE commission would include outside experts. I have signed on as a co-sponsor of the Conrad-Gregg proposal, and I am pleased to learn they intend to hold a hearing on the bill in the very near future. I look forward to working with them to get the bill passed.

I also commend Democratic Congressman Jim Cooper of Tennessee and Republican Congressman FRANK Wolf of Virginia who introduced a bipartisan SAFE commission bill in the House of Representatives. I have been working with Congressman WOLF for more than a year on this proposal, and I welcome Congressman COOPER's decision to join us.

This bipartisan, bicameral group has support from corporate executives, religious leaders, and think tanks across the political spectrum, from the Heritage Foundation to the Brookings Institution, and former Members from both parties, such as former Senators Warren Rudman and Bob Kerrey, and former Congressmen Bill Frenzel and Leon Panetta.

Our entitlement programs are creaking under the strain of an aging society and runaway health care costs. Our Tax Code is imploding from the hundreds of economic and social policies that Congress pursues through tax incentives and from the dozens of temporary tax provisions that wreak havoc on families and businesses trying to plan their affairs.

Neither our major entitlement programs nor our Tax Code are sustain-

able in the current form. The appropriations bills that we are debating this week are shrinking as a share of the budget as entitlements crowd out domestic discretionary spending. We must come together and develop a bipartisan consensus to fix these systems so our children and grandchildren can enjoy prosperity and increasing standards of living.

I want to share with my colleagues some extraordinary numbers that reveal our Nation's looming fiscal crisis. I speak out of concern not only for our generation but also for our children and our grandchildren. They are going to bear the burden of reckless fiscal policies.

Sir Edmund Burke, the father of conservative thought, said:

Society is . . . a partnership not only between those who are living, but between those who are living, those who are dead, and those who are to be born.

Unless we change course, we will break that partnership with those who are yet to be born. This grave situation can be addressed only through hard bipartisan work, and we must begin our work now, for every day we wait, the solutions become more painful.

In the simplest of terms, the Federal Government continues to spend more than it brings in. Running up the credit card for today's needs and leaving the bill for future generations should not be the policy of this country, this Congress, or this administration. It represents a recklessness that threatens our economic security, our global competitiveness, and our future quality of life. The Federal Government has become the biggest violator of credit card abuse in the world.

Comptroller David Walker has said:

The greatest threat to our future is our fiscal irresponsibility.

He added:

America suffers from a serious case of myopia, or nearsightedness, both in the public sector and the private sector. We need to start focusing more on the future. We need to start recognizing the reality that we're on an imprudent and unsustainable fiscal path, and we need to get started now.

Everyone in this great body should heed Comptroller Walker's warning.

Our commitments to the war on terror, to securing our borders, to educating our workforce, and to investing in our Nation's infrastructure demand tremendous resources and require long-term financial commitments. At the same time, we cannot ignore the demographic tide that will soon overwhelm our resources. We need a system for raising the revenues necessary to fund these priorities that does as little damage to the economy as possible. In short, the need for tax reform and entitlement reform has never been greater. A historical perspective helps to highlight the gravity of our current situation.

The fiscal year 2007 budget deficit was \$163 billion, but that figure hides the true degree to which our fiscal situation has deteriorated, mainly because it uses every dime of the Social